

Inviting Innovation in Interprofessional Care of Elders with Chronic Illnesses

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This project invites innovation in the interprofessional care of elders with multiple chronic conditions (MCC) within a well-established and accredited (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education) nurse practitioner program at the University of Vermont (UVM). The UVM nursing graduate program prepares adult and family nurse practitioners for practice in primary care, particularly in the rural areas of Vermont. For this project, these activities are proposed: 1) Create course activities using first a webinar format and then a “designed inter-professional practice (IPP) in a virtual environment” (DIVE) for use in nursing, physical therapy, pharmacy, social work, nutrition, exercise science, medicine, and communication sciences and disorders courses. 2) Develop a course that will focus on IPP addressing the health of populations, “Improving Health in Patients and Populations”. It will be offered across six graduate health care curricula; 3) Utilize distance conferencing methods by nurse practitioner students practicing in rural Vermont to present and collaborate on complex cases of elders with MCC with their graduate student colleagues in physical therapy, pharmacy, social work, nutrition, medicine, and communication sciences and disorders courses.

The following are the specific, measurable objectives which this project will accomplish: 1. Include Interprofessional Education Competencies (IPEC) in courses taught by six disciplines in fall 2013, 2014, and 2015. 2. Establish a course activity in IPP using a webinar activity. 3. Create an elder avatar in a virtual environment (VE) for the purpose of further exploration of diversity and complex care. 4. Design a learning activity with content experts (faculty) and the VE consultant for interprofessional practice in a virtual environment (DIVE). 5. Construct the DIVE module (assessment, planning, and team coordination of care of the elder avatar) into six courses. 6. Develop a new course (Improving Health in Patients and Populations) in fall 2013 for graduate students in nursing, social work, medicine, physical therapy, and communication sciences. This course offered initially as an IP elective, will focus on improving population health through interprofessional practice solutions to chronic illness. 7. Discuss selected cases of elders with MCC and their families/care-providers, as seen during the nurse practitioner students’ rural health experience with students from other disciplines (beginning January 2015.) using distance modalities. 8. Evaluate interprofessional student/faculty care by tracking the following: a) Number of cases referred to the IP student team b) Number of interprofessional referrals to community professionals by students after IP team discussions c) Distance conferences completed. 9. Evaluate educational experiences using: a) Student course evaluations. b) Number of students in the elective course. c) Number of courses with specific IPEC included. . d) Perceived collaboration of IP student teams.

The project will accomplish the above objectives by utilizing the expertise of a variety of University of Vermont faculty in combination with an experienced virtual environment consultant. Didactic improvements will inform innovation in IP care in the clinical setting. Students mentored in IPP both in virtual and real settings will role model the effectiveness of IPP in the care of elders with MCC. The funding preferences are: 1) Substantially benefit rural populations: this project will include IPP conference initiated from a rural setting by NP students; and 2) Help meet public health nursing needs in state health departments: training for an interprofessional workforce is necessary for successful implementation of the Vermont Blueprint for Health Chronic Care initiative.